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ABSTRACT

This paper asserts that creating successful school reform can be difficult. The first part discusses the concept of school culture to explain challenges to school reform, examining why existing school culture is necessary for a smoothly functioning and stable school but an obstacle to educational change and noting that attempts to transform school culture through external means usually fail. It introduces the alternative concept of internal transformation of culture, which empowers school participants to change their practices, expectations, and attitudes via a change process that sets new goals and provides tools to help reach them. The second part introduces the Accelerated Schools Project (ASP) in the United States and Hong Kong, which transforms traditional schools that rely on rote learning into schools that utilize approaches typically used with gifted and talented students. The paper examines whether a reform model developed in one country can successfully transform schools in another, culturally different, country. It introduces facets of the ASP process, linking them to their role in internal cultural transformation. The final section addresses what has been learned in the 50 Hong Kong schools and describes a strategy for ascertaining the conditions under which the ASP approach has shown success, noting how those conditions might be replicated. (Contains 16 references.) (SM)

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LEARNING FROM SCHOOL REFORM

Henry M. Levin

Prepared for the International Conference on Rejuvenating Schools Through Partnership, May 22-24, 2001, Hong Kong sponsored by the Chinese University of Hong Kong.
The author wishes to give deep thanks to Pilar Soler for her seminal contributions to the Accelerated Schools Project and her devoted attention to the Accelerated Schools Quality Education Project (ASQEP) in Hong Kong. He also wishes to express his appreciation and admiration to Dean Yue Ping Chung and Professor John Lee for their collaboration and commitment to the project..

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Abstract

Major changes in schools or school reform have not been highly successful anyplace in the world. Although there are occasional reports of success, the more typical case is one where substantial change is not present. This paper comprises three parts. First, I discuss the concept of school culture to explain the challenge to school reform. I attempt to show why existing school culture is necessary for a smoothly functioning and stable school, but an obstacle to educational change. Attempts to transform school culture through external means have almost always failed. As an alternative I introduce the concept of internal transformation of culture, the empowerment of school participants to change their practices, expectations, and attitudes through introducing a change process that sets new goals and a set of tools that can be used to reach them.

The second part introduces the Accelerated Schools Project, a project that was established in 1986 and that presently encompasses over 1,000 schools in 41 states of the U.S. and 50 schools in Hong Kong. The issue that is raised is whether a reform model developed in one country and premised on very different cultural characteristics can succeed in transforming schools in another country, Hong Kong. The various parts of the ASP process are introduced and linked to their role in the internal cultural transformation of schools.

The final part asks what has been learned after three years of experience in Hong Kong among the 50 schools. Has the process been introduced and implemented effectively? Does it work? The paper sets out a strategy for ascertaining under what conditions the ASP approach has shown success and how those conditions might be replicated.

H. M. Levin
May 2001

LEARNING FROM SCHOOL REFORM

INTRODUCTION

One of the major challenges to school reform is that most schools are not looking for change. They have settled into a set of standard routines and relationships that are widely accepted by participants. Even when there is concern by some staff about a particular issue, the larger context and operation of schools is rarely challenged. This is understandable. Any institution, including the school, needs to have shared premises on which its continuous functioning depends. This agreement is often tacit in the sense of "this is the way we do things", and new members absorb their roles through experiences within this context. There are strong advantages to schools or other institutions in maintaining and reproducing their operations and culture. This agreement assures stability over time rather than sharp fluctuations or deviations from normalcy. It provides clear roles, expectations and modes of behavior for its participants. And, even as personnel change, the traditions carry on smoothly as new members are initiated into the routines.

But, this arrangement has drawbacks in a changing world. Its very stability creates formidable obstacles to mobilizing for change. Respect for tradition and force of habit can be insurmountable hurdles to modification of practice. Certainly, this has been the experience with school reform (Sarason 1982). Pressures have been placed on schools to modify their operations in response to globalization, information technology, pressures for innovation, and changing views of human development. Although there are popular calls for school reform to create a

different system of education and educational outcomes as the world changes, schools tend to resist the changes.

This presentation asks the fundamental question of how one obtains change in a system characterized by conservatism and stability. In the next section, we review some of the reasons that schools are so remarkably resistant to change. We pay specific attention to the difficulties of transferring school practices from one site or locale or country to another. In the following section we will present the strategy of the Accelerated Schools Project and its challenges in initiating changes in over 1,000 schools in the U.S. and 50 schools in Hong Kong. In the final section, we will view the Accelerated Schools model as the basis for a school reform laboratory from which much can be learned about the possibilities and strategies for school reform in Hong Kong.

WHY DO SCHOOLS RESIST REFORM?

Schools resist reform because their operation depends upon a stable and shared understanding or culture that is the framework that integrates and defines school operations. That culture is built on tradition, habit, expectations, and images of what schools should do and be. To suggest that schools should change is to suggest that traditions, habits, expectations, and images be immediately modified, a virtual impossibility. So, school reform tends to focus on the illusion that it is only skills that must be changed. But it is attitudes and modes of operation which are the greatest obstacles to change, not a lack of skills. Skills can be taught to school participants if they are convinced that they need those skills. But, if they are not persuaded that change is needed in the first place or that the school is fundamentally flawed, it is unlikely that they will direct their efforts towards transformation.

So, if existing school culture is the greatest obstacle to reform, is there the possibility of using culture to effect reform. To answer this question, we must attempt to define the components of school culture. School culture refers to widely-shared understanding, behavior, and attitudes that characterize a school's participants and operations as reinforced by interactions with others and perceptions of the world.[1] School culture refers to those aspects of schools that we take for granted. That is, we are so immersed in them, and they are so much a part of our lives, that we do not question them. We accept these features as necessary and integral to schools and school operations.

School culture has many dimensions that give meaning to the daily lives of all of the participants including students, staff, parents, and members of the larger community. Some specific features of school culture include: (1) expectations about children in terms of normal behavior and what they should learn including the possibility of different expectations by race, gender, and social class; (2) expectations by the students, themselves, about appropriate school experiences and self-images of their proficiencies; (3) expectations about the roles of adults in the school in terms of legitimate actions; (4) opinions about acceptable educational practices; and (5) basic beliefs about the desirability for change. It is the tacit agreement around these dimensions that enables schools to function as purposive institutions. If each were a source of contestation, schools would have difficulty in carrying out their missions, for the mission, itself, would be undermined.

Because schools have their own cultures, they resist changes that are premised on a very different set of beliefs. For example, a school that believes that students must be tracked into ability groups will not be enthusiastic about a reform that is premised on mixed ability grouping.

[1] Finnan and Levin (2000) address this topic in greater detail. For a more extensive version, see Finnan and Swanson (2000).

A school that defines mathematics in terms of the memorization of "math facts" and the carrying out of specific mathematical operations will be unlikely to embrace an emphasis on conceptual approaches to mathematics and problem-solving. A school that views writing as highly stylized and evaluates it largely for mechanics of presentation rather than content will resist a new curriculum where writing is viewed primarily as a creative and expressive skill. And, teachers who are used to high degree of structure and authority in the classroom will feel uncomfortable when pressed to consider more participative and democratic forms of pedagogy.

The point is that every school reform is embedded in a specific perspective of school culture that may not be compatible with the actual school culture that exists in a particular setting. It is this lack of congruence that is primarily responsible for the failure of school reforms to take hold in new settings. This insight provides an explanation of what has typically happened with school reforms. In many cases, school culture was incompatible with the proposed school reform. In those cases, it is rare that the reform is implemented beyond a surface existence. In fact, when reforms are forced on schools that are not receptive, the school often has more influence in modifying the reform than the reform has in modifying the school (McLaughlin 1990). Schools are not inert entities that can be easily molded in the shape desired by reformers. Schools are active communities of members united by a deeply etched culture that will resist the invasion of alien ideas and practices. This challenge has been too little recognized by educational reformers. Yet, so much of educational reform has failed, both nationally and internationally, because of the ill fit between the reform and the extant culture of the school.[2]

Even when a reform succeeds in one school, it may not succeed in another school in the same neighborhood. Schools are characterized by their own local cultures deriving from their

[2] Hargreaves, Lieberman, Fullan, and Hopkins (1998) provide a rich source of studies that illustrate these challenges.

histories and specific populations as well as the more general culture that all schools in a particular society might share. Sarason (1982) is pessimistic that school culture can be changed. Cuban (1990) even suggests that cycles of reform are repeated again and again in futility because the reformers do not seem to recognize that school culture is not compatible with their movements. The result is that the reforms are abandoned and adopted once again, and they continue to fail, even after repeated attempts.

More recent reforms have recognized the resistance of school culture to change. Accordingly, they have responded in two different ways. The first is requiring that any school that is "interested" in adopting a reform needs to demonstrate its "buy-in". Buy-in generally consists of making information on one or more reforms accessible to members of the school community, and ultimately requiring a vote of the school staff. In the U.S. a typical requirement of the sponsors of major, national reforms is that 80 percent of the teachers (in Accelerated Schools, staff and parent representatives as well as teachers) must support the adoption of a specific reform before the reform organization will agree to collaborate with the school.

Presumably, those schools that buy-in are ones that are prepared to accept change and to examine their practices. But, a substantial number of schools that have indicated buy-in fail to fully implement the reforms. In some cases the so-called "buy-in" was superficial or non-existent. The voting process may have been distorted by pressures from the principal or school district. Or the vote may have been a fair one, but not well-informed for a staff that was not provided with time and data to understand the intricacies and demands of the reform model. Even when substantial information is provided, school staffs may not be able to envision how the abstractions of a reform translate into concrete changes in the life of the school. They may renege when they realize that the reform will require greater changes in educational practices and

attitudes than were anticipated. This becomes apparent only after direct experience with the reform.

Accordingly, some of the reforms use a different approach, even when they require approval by the school. This approach incorporates empowerment strategies that place the principal responsibilities for implementing the reform on school personnel rather than on external experts. The reform is premised on the internal actions of school staff who are provided with the tools to obtain mutual agreement on goals and to employ a process of change that is used to reach them. This is the strategy taken by the Accelerated Schools Project in conjunction with the 80 percent buy-in requirement.[3] The assumption underlying the empowerment process is the view that if the school can undertake its own process of democratic decision-making by staff, parents, and students, it will be able to transform its own culture. We will discuss this process at greater length in the next section.

ACCELERATED SCHOOLS PROCESS

The Accelerated Schools Project was established in 1986 as a way of transforming traditional schools that place heavy reliance on rote learning into schools using the type of instruction for gifted and talented students. Although the project was started initially to provide academic acceleration for educationally at-risk students, it has been extended to schools where students have good results on traditional academic measures. The long-term priority is to establish schools in which enrichment replaces memorization, in which student projects replace drill, and in which student assessment is based upon what Sternberg (1997) has called measures of successful intelligence, not inert intelligence. Of course students learn basic skills, but these are integrated into the activities of a different type of school. Robert Sternberg (1997) has

[3] Details on the process are found in Levin (1998) and Hopfenberg, Levin, et al. (1993). The cultivation of change in a school is found in Finnan and Swanson (2000).

emphasized the integration of the three types of intelligence in the education of every child. The inculcation of analytic intelligence would extend far beyond memorization of facts to analysis and problem solving. Creative intelligence would be manifested in the solution of problems in non-ordinary ways, encouraging the viewing of the world from different perspectives and utilizing artistic devices and metaphors to address one's creative instincts. Practical intelligence is reflected in applying analytical and creative intelligence to real world situations.

These approaches can best be satisfied through creating what is normally thought of as gifted and talented instruction within more democratic schools.[4] The Accelerated Schools Project was established in the U.S. in 1986 and presently encompasses about 600,000 students in 1,100 schools in 41 states as well as Australia and Hong Kong. In its sixteenth year, the Accelerated Schools Project is one of the largest and oldest comprehensive school reforms in the U.S., so it draws upon considerable experience at transforming schools.[5] The goal of Accelerated Schools is to transform schools educating at-risk students from an emphasis on drill to one that embodies the pedagogy for gifted and talented students so that students will meet both their developmental needs and those required for adult life through an integrated system of powerful learning.[6] Powerful learning is embodied in research projects, artistic endeavors, community studies, and a

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[4]. A good source on educational change and school reform is A. Hargreaves, A. Lieberman, M. Fullan, and D. Hopkins, 1998). In the U.S. two models with overlapping democratic and human development objectives with Accelerated Schools are the Coalition of Essential Schools and the League of Professional Schools. The Coalition model is discussed by its founder in T. Sizer (1996). The League model is found in C. Glickman (1998)

[5] The evolution of the project is documented in H. M. Levin 1998. Evaluation results have been strong in terms of increased student achievement, parental participation, student attendance, and the establishment of gifted and talented approaches. A recent evaluation of six schools in Memphis, Tennessee found that over three years, students had progressed from about the bottom third of the distribution in reading achievement to the top third. See Steven M. Ross and others (1999). A national evaluation of results for the five year period following adoption of the model in a national sample of schools found that Accelerated Schools had improved student performance on standardized test scores by about one-fourth of a standard deviation, despite the fact that the intervention was designed to focus primarily on outcomes not measured by examination scores. See Fred Doolittle (2001). The full report is available from the Manpower Development Research Corporation in New York City.

[6] Powerful learning refers to a pedagogical strategy in which curriculum, instructional approaches, and school context (organization, climate, and resources) are integrated around academic enrichment approaches. See W.

range of applications where knowledge is applied to real world activities. Many important competencies required for the "new" workplace can be embedded in each activity (e.g. developing initiative, cooperation, groupwork, peer training, evaluation, communication, reasoning, problem-solving, decision-making information, planning. learning skills, and multicultural skills). And students can generate authentic ideas, products, artistic performances, literary works, and problem solutions that can be assessed directly for quality rather than assuming that examination scores will be adequate assessment instruments

The Accelerated Schools Project places great weight on a transformation process at each school site that encourages reflection and ideas by the teachers, students, and parents who must engage in change. The process is neither mechanical nor automatic, but requires the building of school communities dedicated to new goals and transformation. This process is at the heart of initiating an internal transformation of school culture in the new directions that are sought. The process provides guidelines and tools for transformation and benchmarks to be used in assessment. It also requires a trained coach who will work with the school patiently and support the change process and will assist the school to trouble-shoot problems as they arise. Finally, it requires strong leadership on the part of the school principal and others and the time to work together to receive training and to engage in the process.

The Accelerated Schools Project was established initially to address the needs of students in at-risk situations, those with low levels of family income and parental education as well as marginalized immigrants and racial minorities. Although its success has been extended to schools with students from middle-class families, its predominant commitment is to those who need the most attention, at-risk populations. Recent research on gifted and talented students is

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Hopfenberg, H. M. Levin, and others (1993) pp. 159-280. Also see the analysis of the components of powerful learning on www.acceleratedschools.net.

highly supportive of the benefits of using academic enrichment for all students.[7] This calls for a dramatic shift in the culture of the school so that it values a wider range of pedagogical activities and goals rather than the more traditional memorization activities. This means creating a school which is much more democratic in character and in which staff (with the participation of parents and students) undertake planning, problem-solving, collaborative endeavors, assessment, and many of the other behaviors required of high-participation and high-productivity workplaces.

The Accelerated Schools Process

Educational reform is often viewed abstractly as a design for change rather than as a complex process of change. But the change process itself is the key to implemention. The Accelerated School change strategy represents a philosophy and a process for transforming conventional schools into environments where powerful learning experiences are daily occurrences for all members of a school community. It focuses on changing school culture and school practices simultaneously. The philosophy of the Accelerated schools Model encompasses an overall goal, three principles, certain values, and a theory about powerful learning. The process of the Accelerated schools Model is a systematic set of practices for "getting from here to there"—from conventional schools to accelerated ones. A brief discussion will highlight the concrete nature of what is meant.

- **Living Principles**

Accelerated Schools build on the active practice of three central principles:

(1) Unity of purpose refers to an active collaboration among parents, teachers, students, support staff, administrators, and the local community toward setting and achieving a common

[7] See, for example, J. S. Renzulli, "The Definition of High-End Learning," available at www.gifted.uconn.edu Renzulli is the Director of the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented at the University of Connecticut. Also. see C. Finnan and J. D. Swanson, (2000)

set of goals for the school. These shared goals and values become the focal point of everyone's efforts.

(2) Empowerment coupled with responsibility refers to the ability of the participants of a school community in both the school and at home to make important educational decisions, take responsibility for implementing those decisions, and take responsibility for the outcomes of those decisions. The purpose of this principle is to break the present stalemate among administrators, teachers, parents, support staff, and students in which the participants tend to blame each other as well as other factors "beyond their control" (e.g. the government) for the poor educational outcomes of students. Unless all of the major actors can be empowered to seek a common set of goals and influence the educational and social processes to realize those goals, it is unlikely that the desired improvements will take place or be sustained.

This shift from a central authority to the school requires the establishment of three sets of institutional changes that are usually not present. First, there must be an effective system of school governance that can involve and stimulate participation of all of the pertinent constituencies in an effective way. Second, since good decisions are informed-decisions, the school must adopt a method of problem-solving that addresses its challenges and provides appropriate decisions based upon a good base of information. Third, the school needs its own system of assessment to ascertain the consequences of its decisions. The development of all three of these is incorporated into the Accelerated Schools process.

(3) Building on strengths refers to utilizing all of the learning resources that students, parents, all school staff, and communities bring to the educational endeavor. Accelerated School communities actively look for and build upon the strengths of all students, parents, teachers,

support staff, administrators, the district and the local community as they implement the Accelerated schools process and develop powerful learning experiences.

Underlying the Accelerated principles and practices are a set of central values, beliefs, and attitudes, which are a basis for school development. When shared, they help create the culture for Accelerated School change. Equity, participation, communication, collaboration, community, reflection, experimentation, trust, risk-taking, and the school as the center of expertise are among the central values that orient all actions of an Accelerated school. Many of these values stem from the philosophy of John Dewey.

But, especially central to building on student strengths is the powerful learning approach, which integrates curriculum, instruction, and school organization rather than viewing each dimension as independent.[8] The conception of powerful learning is based on the premise that the educational approach that we offer to "gifted" children works well for all children. Accelerated schools create powerful learning situations that motivate students to grow and succeed. In Accelerated Schools, students see meaning in their lessons and perceive connections between school activities and experiences outside of the school. They learn actively and in ways that build on their own strengths, develop their natural talents and gifts, apply them in creative ways towards problem-solving and decision-making, two key ingredients of workplaces in the information economy.

These learning experiences require higher order thinking, complex reasoning, and relevant content. In such situations, children actively discover the curriculum objectives, rather than passively going through textbooks and filling out worksheets. At the same time, this type of learning environment requires organization and support, so that adults are challenged to create a

[8] Powerful learning also embraces five components of learning: authenticity; continuity; child-focus, inclusion, and interaction. For details on these and other aspects of the powerful learning model, see www.acceleratedschools.net.

safe environment for learning that extends far beyond the classroom into every aspect of the school, home, and community.

Implementation

In order to function as Accelerated Schools, school communities need to work towards a unity of purpose, to make responsible decisions, and to build on strengths. For these reasons, the Accelerated Schools Project has developed a systematic process which is designed to establish for the school a unified purpose, shared decision-making authority and responsibility, and a capacity to build on the many strengths unique to each school site.

A school community can initiate the Accelerated schools process in a set of interrelated processes. The following paragraphs provide a brief picture of the steps in the process.

- ***Stock-Taking***

First, the school takes stock of the "here", i.e., where the school is at the onset of the change process. The entire school gathers quantitative and qualitative information on the history of the school; data on students, staff, and school facilities; information on the community and cultures of students and their parents; a description of curricular and instructional practices; analysis of the quality of students work; information on the attitudes and beliefs of school members; particular strengths of the school; and data on attendance, disaggregated test scores, and other measures of student performance. The process of collecting, analyzing, and discussing baseline information provides a useful record of the school's status at the beginning of the transformation process against which we can measure progress over time. Taking stock fosters a sense of ownership of the process and begins to build unity of purpose in the school a basic requirement for shifting school culture.

- ***Forging A Vision***

During the vision process, the school community begins to forge a desired picture of the school that will become the focus for change. Again, the entire school community—including teachers, support staff, principal, vice principals, parents, central office administrators, the community, and, most importantly, students—should engage in creating a vision. In forging a vision, all adult parties think about the kind of school they would want for their own children, and students develop a description of the dream school they want for themselves. The elements of the visions of the different parties are brought together into a comprehensive aspiration. The all-inclusive nature of defining a vision results in ownership of a common set of goals and long-term commitment to achieving them.

Setting Priorities

Next, the school community compares the taking stock information with the vision in order to become aware of the areas in which their current situation falls short of their vision. The school community compiles and synthesizes all of the differences between the present situation and the future vision. This process may identify a very large number of challenges, but together the school community sets three to five initial priorities, which will become the immediate, primary focus of the school.

Governance

After setting priorities, the school establishes its governance structures that focus on participatory decision-making. All staff and representative students and parents select one of the priority areas on which to work. These priority groups become cadres or small task forces that use the *Inquiry Process* to address their challenges. Representatives from the cadres, administrators, and other representatives from areas such as departments, grade levels, the

student body, parents, etc. form the steering committee which serves as a clearinghouse for decision-making and communication. Decisions are made by the school community-as-a-whole, energizing members to take collective action.

- ***Inquiry Decision-making***

The Inquiry Process is the method used by all members of the school community, whether in cadres, departments, or as individuals to move the school toward the vision and Accelerated practices throughout the school. Through the Inquiry Process, teachers, administrators, and parents identify and define educational challenges, look for alternative solutions, and implement and evaluate those solutions. One full cycle of the process can take up to a full school year because it entails a wide range of issues which touch upon all facets of the school—on culture as well as pedagogical practices.

The Inquiry Process provides schools with the opportunity to examine challenges in an in-depth manner in contrast to the traditional superficial search for solutions. Inquiry also encourages the school community to produce knowledge for its own use, thus building on the many strengths at the school site. In addition, Inquiry empowers those at the school site to make the changes they know are best for students. It is important to note that Inquiry may lead different schools in very different directions since each school has different challenges, strengths, and visions.

- ***Assessing Progress***

On a regular basis, the Accelerated Schools communities examine their practices, student experiences, and school climate to see if they meet the standards that they would set for their own children. The overall philosophy of assessment is based upon the premise that if the school is not good enough for the children of staff, it is not good enough for any child. This means that

the staff must work together to create for all children in the school the experiences that they desire for their own children.

Progress is assessed in Accelerated Schools by a system that focuses on both school and student development. Schools work to align their assessment practices with goals of the Accelerated Schools philosophy and process. School communities also review their action plans and the implementation process to make sure that decisions make their way into school practices.

The Project has developed an Internal Assessment Toolkit, which is available on its website: <www.acceleratedschools.net>. This Toolkit provides guidance to school communities for assessing their implementation of an Accelerated school with particular emphasis on measuring that progress against established benchmarks. In addition, Accelerated Schools evaluate such school outcomes as levels of student and family participation in school activities. Accelerated Schools also assess student performance to assure that students are successful in their learning and are leaving the school with the necessary skills and accomplishments reflected in the school vision. Periodic evaluation on wide-spectrum, standardized achievement tests as well as on tailored assessments created by school staff for each curriculum strand are essential ingredients as well as assessments of the students' acquisition of higher-order thinking and reasoning skills in core curricular areas.[9]

- ***Capacity Building***

Although we have used different training models, we have concluded that one is superior for our purposes.[10] The Project prepares an external coach (at least 25% time), the principal, and an internal facilitator (at least 25% time) to work together as a team in transforming the school. Accordingly, we have established formal training workshops for Accelerated School coaches,

[9] A good source on performance assessment is G. Wiggins, Assessing Student Performance: Exploring the Purpose and Limits of Testing (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993).

principals, and school facilitators at regional centers that can be used to provide the knowledge and skills required for establishing Accelerated Schools. These workshops emphasize an understanding of Accelerated practices that will be implemented at designated pilot school sites following the training.

In addition to the more formal training requirements, coaches are at the school site on a weekly basis to build capacity and trouble-shoot. All coaches are mentored by staff from regional centers with regular communications, monthly meetings, and mentorship visits to school sites. Through this model, we are attempting to ensure that all schools have accessibility to trained coaches and facilitators who can provide the training, follow-up, and guidance at the school site that we have found necessary. There is also a National Conference for the Accelerated Schools Project that draws participants, both nationally and internationally, for sharing experiences and ideas at workshops and through major presentations and informal discussions.

ACCELERATED SCHOOLS IN HONG KONG

The rationale for establishing Accelerated Schools in Hong Kong was to find a way to move from a traditional educational approach to a more active stragegy that would prepare the young for major changes in the workplace (Levin 1997). Initially the plan was to select just three schools as pilot schools. Staff from the Chinese University of Hong Kong would receive training from the Accelerated Schools Project (ASP) in the U.S., and they would get hands-on experience in transforming the three schools during the next few years. There was particular concern with the issue of taking a reform from one culture and applying it to another. So, at the heart of the Hong Kong project was a focus on institutional learning prior to any scale-up.

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[10] For details, see the reference in footnote 24.

During the 1997-98 academic year, the Hong Kong government issued a tender for educational reform projects. The Chinese University of Hong Kong applied for funding for a substantial scaling-up of the ASP, a three year project to launch 50 Accelerated Schools. This funding was awarded, and the expansion began in the Fall of 1998. Professor John Lee was appointed by Dean Chung to direct the project. He assembled a staff with an assistant Mr. Chiu and 11 School Development Officers who were expected to receive training. Each would work with about five schools. Lee has written descriptions of the project in other places, so these should be referred to for details. Pilar Soler of the ASP in the U.S. was asked to provide training, three sessions in the first year and two sessions in each subsequent year, to the CUHK training teams. Soler had been the Assistant Director for Training Development at the National Center for the Accelerated Schools Project, had designed basic parts of the ASP process, and was the founder and director of the New York Accelerated Schools Center.

The Hong Kong component was called the Accelerated Schools for Quality Education Project (ASQEP), and its several reports discuss some of the details of the activities. The purpose of this part of the presentation is to suggest methods of analysis that can reveal useful information about changing school culture in Hong Kong, especially the shift from schools based upon memorization to powerful learning strategies based upon constructivist approaches. These lessons are complicated by two cultural shifts. The first is that of a cultural change in school pedagogy. This is similar to what ASP has faced in the U.S. But, the second is a cultural shift in schools from one society to another. Beyond the pedagogy, there are differences from country-to-country in the larger culture of schooling or what has been referred to as "Societal Assumptions Influencing School and Classroom Culture" (Finnan and Swanson, 2000: pp. 68-72). It is likely that the societal perspectives and individual school perspectives are closely

aligned. When a school change model is introduced into one country from another, both types of cultural change must be confronted.

What was the Intervention?

In analyzing school change, it is important to first be clear about the intervention. In the previous sections we referred to the challenge of changing school culture and the development of the ASP as a strategy for internal transformation of school culture. But, the actual intervention depends upon how the ASP model was implemented in the Hong Kong project. How was the model introduced to the participating schools? Why did they select it? How much did they know about it? What incentives beyond its intrinsic features were present? How did the project build its capacity to work with schools on ASP? What kind of training and how much training were received by the school development officers and school staffs both prior to and during the conduct of the ASQEP? How did the training activity translate into training and other activities at school sites? How often did school development officers (SDO's) visit the sites, and what did they do on these visits? How much time was devoted to ASP activities at school sites? How strong was the emphasis on inquiry and powerful learning? These are examples of the types of documentation to know what the actual intervention as opposed to the features of the ASP model as described in the abstract.

Implementation of the ASQEP

Obviously, the purpose of all of this activity is to obtain change in the schools that participated, especially shifts from regulated and centrally administered approaches to school operations to inquiry-based empowerment and from rote learning to powerful learning. The study of implementation requires a focus on the activities of taking-stock, vision, setting priorities, governance, and adoption of inquiry-based solutions to challenges and powerful

learning. How was each stage addressed and connected with the previous stages, and what were the implementation outcomes? SDO's maintained records on activities at school sites. Moreover, the ASP provides an assessment toolkit consisting of a rubric of benchmarks, ratings, and suggested evidence. The ASQEP has applied these benchmarks to ascertain levels of implementation of ASP at each school. It is our understanding that these assessment criteria are being applied to the fifty schools, so that the ASQEP will have data on implementation at each site.

Ideally, it would have been useful to collect baseline data on school operations at the outset to see where schools were starting from. However, the timing of the funding cycle and the need to begin immediately in the Fall of 1998 precluded this possibility. Nevertheless, the fact that so much of the ASP process was new to all schools meant that almost all were starting from a baseline that looked very different than the ASP model. In the future, new ASP interventions ought to collect baseline data and view implementation in terms of change from baseline rather than the absolute level.

Explaining Differences in Progress

Presumably there have been differences in progress. Some schools have transformed their cultures and operations significantly and have made considerable inroads into inquiry and powerful learning. Others have made some progress, often uneven meaning that they have made greater progress on some aspects of implementation than on others. Other schools are likely to look not very different than at the outset. To maximize overall learning on this school reform, it is important to understand why some schools made considerably more progress than others. Moreover, it is important to consider whether the conditions that make for greater progress can be replicated to raise the probability of success in other schools.

Based upon what we have learned in the U.S. there are at least two initial hypotheses that might be used to explore the causes of differential progress: leadership and time.

(1) Leadership--Leadership at the level of the coach (or school development officer in the Hong Kong model) and principal can account for large differences in implementation. Some leaders have enthusiasm, commitment, and skills to support a move to inquiry and powerful learning. Others are less open to change and embrace the existing school culture so completely that they will not make much effort to engage and lead the process. Good leadership must be continuous in supporting day-to-day application of the ASP process, inquiry and powerful-learning. It must be active and passionate. It must be obvious to the school community that ASP success is deeply desired by the coach and principal. Simply paying lipservice to the words of ASP without appropriate actions will give a message of superficiality and commitment to the status quo. Finally, leaders need skills to demonstrate change and to protect the school from outside influences that stand in the way of transformation (Christensen 1995). It is our belief that most of the skills can be taught, but not the commitment, passion, and interpersonal support that are needed. We have found that differences in leadership are important causes of differences in school success.

(2) Time--Changes in school culture and in individual behavior take time. Most teachers have spent at least four years in post-secondary education training to be teachers. In addition, they have gone to workshops and have been conditioned by many years of teaching experience. This means that their attitudes, expectations, and practices are likely to be deeply-rooted and impervious to brief training experiences. For this reason the ASP has provided a continuous process that requires mutual support and interaction. This process necessitates a substantial and deep time commitment to formal training for each phase of the ASP process as well as

for practicing inquiry and powerful learning. If that time is not provided, it is unlikely that there will be much change. Schools need to find adequate time for training, planning and decision-making, and the application of powerful learning. In our experience, inadequate time allocations are also a major reason for a lack of school progress.

Although these are two of the leading hypotheses for explaining differences in school progress, they are not the only ones. One approach to uncover the importance of these and other influences on progress is to use the assessment tools to classify schools according to three levels of implementation: high, medium, and low. An attempt can be made to explain progress among the three groups by studying if there were systematic differences in characteristics of schools and their engagement in the ASQEP. Clearly, two of the variables that need to be examined are the amount of time devoted to ASP and the quality of leadership. However, other dimensions may also be important including characteristics of the teaching force, parental pressures, formal organization of the school, extent of school autonomy, history of centralized versus decentralized decision-making at the school site and previous experience with constructivist approaches to teaching and learning. All of these and others may account for the differences.

Such differences in factors that predict success in cultural transformation of schools and Accelerated Schools practices can be used to both improve implementation in the initial schools and to help plan for greater success in subsequent efforts at new schools. Improving our record at school reform requires continuous learning from previous reforms that can only be derived from deliberate and systematic study of them. If we fail to learn from school reform, we will continue to be frustrated in our quest to make major educational changes. At the heart of effective school reform is the successful transformation of school culture. Only with such transformation can new curriculum and instructional strategies be fully embedded in school life.

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